



BY VARSITY SPIRIT

A large, high-contrast photograph of a cheerleader in a purple and white uniform. She is smiling and looking upwards and to the right. The word 'PURPLE' is printed in large, white, outlined letters across the chest of her jersey. The background is dark, making the cheerleader stand out.

UCA EVENT GUIDELINES | 24 25

UCA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL CHEERLEADING CHAMPIONSHIP, FEBRUARY 7-10, 2025

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*All updates and changes displayed in **RED** font*

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UCA SCHOOL DIVISIONS

All Junior High Divisions – 9th Grade and Below

Junior High Divisions WILL be allowed 9th grade participants if (1) they attend a school that is under the administrative supervision of the same school board as the junior high school that they are representing AND (2) a minority of the team are 9th graders. Junior High teams with a majority of 9th grader participants must compete as a Junior Varsity.

All Junior Varsity Divisions – 7th Grade -12th Grade

Junior Varsity Divisions WILL be allowed 7th and 8th grade participants if they attend a school that is under the administrative supervision of the same school board as the high school that they are representing. Junior Varsity teams must be the official Junior Varsity of the school they represent. Teams will only be allowed to compete in the Junior Varsity Division if they are the official Junior Varsity team. If there is only one team from a school, that team will be required to compete in the Varsity division and meet the Varsity Division grade restrictions. Teams that have members that cheer for varsity sports must compete as a varsity team.

All Varsity Divisions – 8th Grade - 12th Grade

7th grade and below participants will NOT be allowed on a Varsity team. 8th grade participants will be allowed to participate on a Varsity team if the school they attend is under the direct administrative supervision of the same school board as the Varsity team they are representing. If there is only one team from a school, that team will be required to compete in the Varsity division and meet the Varsity Division grade restrictions. Teams that have members that cheer varsity sports must compete as a varsity team.

Game Day Divisions

Individuals are only allowed to compete in a performance routine division and a game day division for the same school/program. If a Junior Varsity and Varsity combine/share athletes for a Game Day Division, they must compete in the Varsity Divisions.

Teams may add up to 2 (two) mascots in their Game Day Routine. The mascot(s) must meet all the eligibility requirements as the athletes. The mascot(s) must enter the floor with the team and should be used to raise crowd energy and participation. The mascot(s) is not allowed to be involved in any stunts/technical skills or tumbling and should position themselves away from skills being performed. The mascot(s) will not count towards the total number nor gender of participants allowed in the division.

Game Day Live Divisions

For more info on Game Day Live, go to page 9-11.

DIVISION GUIDELINES

1. Athletes may only perform up to 2 times if one routine is a performance routine and the other is a game day routine. If an athlete is performing 2 times, they must be representing the same program/school in both performances.
 - a. *Example: An athlete may compete with a VA team in both a performance routine and game day routine.*
 - b. *Example: An athlete may compete with a JV team in a performance routine and the VA game day routine.*
 - c. *Example: An athlete MAY NOT compete with a JR team in a performance routine and with a JV or VA squad for any reason.*
 - d. *Example: An athlete may only compete with a Rec Program in a performance routine and game day routine for that Rec Program.*
2. UCA/UDA strongly recommends that you have an alternate (not a member of another competing team at the same event), who is prepared to substitute in the event of injury, probation, etc. No cheerleader/dancer may represent more than one Team, even in the event of injury or emergency. Once a team checks into the event, the team will not be allowed to change divisions.
3. Teams must compete in the same style Performance Routine and Game Day Routine i.e. Non-Tumbling or Non-Building must be the same for both.

4. Each school may not have more than one team compete in one single division.
5. Regional Event – Division Guidelines: Universal Cheerleaders Association will SPLIT divisions in the best interest of providing a competitive environment.
 - a. When/If a division has 11 or more teams, additional splits may be offered.
 - b. When/If a division has 11 or more teams, a split will only be offered if there is an additional split allowed by the 2024-2025 UCA Division offerings.
 - c. When/If a division has less than 3 teams, they may be combined into the same age/size division.
 - d. Please visit uca.varsity.com for a complete listing of divisions for regional competitions as well as the National High School Cheerleading Championship.

SCHOOL ELIGIBILITY POLICY

1. All members of the cheerleading team must be current members of the official school spirit squads and must attend the school they are representing.
 - a. Exception 1: Single-gender schools may use athletes from affiliated schools if they are official members of the squad. These teams must support the school(s) athletics/ endeavors throughout the year, and not solely combined for competition purposes.
 - b. Exception 2: See exception listed under Junior High, Junior Varsity and Varsity Divisions listed on Page 2.
2. If a school district or state association has more or less restrictions, teams will be required to follow the more restrictive set of rules.
 - a. Example 1 – State A allows 7th grade students to participate on Varsity Teams. Teams from State A will still be required to follow the 8th - 12th grade restrictions for Varsity Teams. These teams are NOT allowed to move into Junior Varsity Division.
 - b. Example 2 – State B does not allow 9th grade or below participation on Varsity Sports. Teams from State B would then need to follow their State Restrictions.
 - c. Example 3 – A Junior High school only has grades 7th- 9th grade. That team would only be allowed to utilize athletes from their school. They would not be allowed pull up or down any other athletes.
3. Individuals are NOT permitted to compete on two **different** School/Rec Teams at the same event. They are permitted on both a School Team and an All Star Team at the same event.
4. If there is only one team from a school, that team will be required to compete in the Varsity division and meet the Varsity Division grade restrictions. Teams that have members that cheer varsity sports must compete as a varsity team.
5. Teams may participate in more than one local or regional competition during the season.
6. The team should display an overall behavior conducive to serving as public representatives and ambassadors of their school/organization.
7. All athletes and coaches must be registered and listed on the Event Roster to be submitted at check in for each event. Roster Forms can be found at [UCA Competition Required Forms](#) under Regional Competition Forms & FAQs.
8. Schools participating in cooperative sports agreement must have written permission from their single governing school board and send in an official request on school board letterhead to NHSCC@varsity.com for approval to the Rules Committee to compete as one team by October 1, 2024.
 - a. Cooperative teams are limited to combining from no more than 2 (two) schools.
 - b. Both schools must be in one school district or governed by one school board.
 - c. Cooperative teams must support the school(s) athletics/ endeavors throughout the year, and not solely combined for competition purposes.

- d. Any team approved must use the combined total enrollment for both schools when submitting the enrollment letter for DI/DII classification.
 - e. If approved, the team must compete as one for the entire 2024-2025 event season.
9. Student-athletes who are subject to an open criminal proceeding relating to any offense involving sexual misconduct or violence, who have a criminal conviction for any offense involving sexual misconduct or violence, or whose names are listed on temporary or permanent ineligible lists maintained by USA Cheer or the U.S. All Star Federation are prohibited from participating in any Varsity Spirit competition.

ENROLLMENT

All teams must submit an official school enrollment letter for determination of DI/DII division status. School enrollment is defined as all students registered as in-school students at the school and any other students also eligible to participate in athletics at that school.

1. High school enrollment includes all students registered for attendance at the school for grades 9-12.
2. The total enrollment must also include all virtual, co-curricular, and/or home school students if they are eligible for athletics at the school.
3. Single gender schools who use athletes from other schools will use the total enrollment of the school the team is representing for DI/DII classification. Teams also need to supply enrollment numbers from each affiliated school.
4. Cooperative teams must include total enrollment from both schools.
 - a. Cooperative teams must have approval from the Rules Committee.
 - b. Cooperative teams are limited to combining from no more than 2 (two) schools.
 - c. Both schools must be in one school district or governed by one school board.
 - d. Cooperative teams must support the school(s) athletics/ endeavors throughout the year, and not solely combined for competition purposes.
 - e. Any team approved must use the combined enrollment for both schools when submitting the enrollment letter for DI/DII classification.
 - f. If approved, the team must compete as one for the entire 24-25 event season.
5. Enrollment letters must include the number of students enrolled at the school as of October 1, 2024, and be submitted no later than October 31, 2024.
6. The official enrollment letter must come from the school's principal or athletic director on official school letterhead and include a copy of the registrar's/attendance office documentation of enrollment by grade/student type.

NHSCC divisions are split into Division I (1400+ school enrollment) & Division II (1399 or less school enrollment).

UCA OPEN RECREATIONAL GUIDELINES AND DIVISIONS

Open Recreational Guidelines

1. Athlete eligibility will be based on the birth year, or partial year listed to be eligible for that division.
2. Teams must submit a Varsity Recreational Roster Verification Form at each event. This form can be found online under Required Forms.
3. Open Recreational Teams will require all coaches to have a USA Cheer Membership. At least one coach must have the USA Cheer Coach membership that includes the USA Cheer Youth Safety Risk Management certification course and must accompany the team at every competition. Proof of certification is required upon registration for every event. See specific details under USA Cheer Coach Membership on page 4.
4. Basket tosses, elevator tosses, and similar multi-based tosses are prohibited.

Affiliated Open Recreational Divisions

The Affiliated Recreational Divisions exist for teams with the main purpose of cheering for and/or supporting a recreational team (i.e. youth football, pee wee sports, community sports teams, etc.).

Teams with a school affiliation may compete in the recreational cheer traditional division, only if at least half of the participants are in the 6th grade or younger and meet the age requirements. Teams with a school affiliation that have a majority of 7th and 8th graders must compete in the junior high division.

Non-Affiliated Open Recreational Divisions

Non-Affiliated Recreational Cheer Divisions exist for teams who will follow the same 2- and 1/2-minute routine format with cheer/sideline and music and all other rules and regulations along with all other teams competing at any UCA event and the NHSCC.

USA CHEER COACH MEMBERSHIP

1. USA Cheer has developed a comprehensive Membership Program, which includes a background check, athlete protection training, acknowledgement of concussion training with return to participation guidance, a member code of conduct, and safety training courses on risk management and safety rules.
2. Varsity Spirit will require that all school coaches, band directors, choreographers, and personnel wishing to access the warmup area, backstage or coaches' box at our competitions have a USA Cheer Coach or Professional Membership. At least one coach must have the USA Cheer Coach Membership that include the USA Cheer Youth Risk Management certification course and must accompany the team at every competition.
3. You must complete your membership requirements before your first competition. Please note that the background check will take 2-10 days to be processed and returned. Coaches without an approved Membership will not be allowed access to the warmup area, backstage or coaches' box.
4. When checking in at Varsity Spirit competitions, you will provide proof of membership for each coach from your organization who wishes to go into the warmup area, backstage or coaches' box. Upon proof of membership, each coach will receive a wristband that will allow them access. **Individuals whose names are listed on the USA Cheer temporary or permanent ineligible list are prohibited from attending Varsity Spirit Events, including all camps and competitions.**
5. The USA Cheer Membership is available on the USA Cheer website. Once your membership is complete, you can print your membership card, or save and display it on your mobile device at event registration along with your photo ID. This season's membership will be active **June 1, 2024 through May 31, 2025.**

UNIFORM GUIDELINES

1. UNIFORMS
 - a. All participant uniforms must cover the midriff when standing at attention. Covered midriff does include flesh or nude colored body suits and liners; however, fringe would not count as a cover. **Does not apply to color guard that attends with the Pep Band.**
 - b. Any team in violation of the uniform guidelines will be assessed a TWO (2) point deduction.
 - c. A traditional sideline uniform (that covers the midriff when standing at attention and has an element that is identifiable to your school – colors, logos, letters, mascot, etc.) is required for all divisions.
 - d. Teams may not use Disney themes, nor may they have costumes that resemble a Disney character. However, Disney music is acceptable if it follows the music guidelines. **Any use of Disney music requires prior approval and must be sent to musicinfo@varsity.com at least one month prior to your first competition.**
2. MAKE-UP
 - a. If worn, make-up should be appropriate for both the performance and age of the athletes, utilizing colors suitable for skin tone.
3. HAIR

- a. Hair for all athletes does not have to be worn the same but must be secured off the face with a simple style that considers all diversities.
- b. Bows are not required. If worn, bows must:
 - NOT be excessive in size
 - NOT be a distraction to the performance.
 - Be positioned in a manner to minimize risk for all participants. This is restricted to back of the head (below the crown)
 - If the bow has tails, they must be facing backwards and down to limit the ability to fall the forehead into the participants' eyes or block the view of the participants while performing.
- c. A .25 deduction will be given to teams in violation of this rule.

TIME LIMITATIONS

1. Introductions
 - a. All introductions (entrances, chants, spellouts, etc.) are considered part of the routine and will be timed as part of the performance. Skills are not allowed during the team's entry to the floor or any time prior to starting the performance. EXCEPTION – See Game Day Below
 - b. All team breaks, rituals and traditions need to take place prior to entering the mat.
 - c. Teams should take the floor immediately with spirit and enthusiasm, but without excessive gestures. Example: chest bumps, hugs, handshakes, etc.
 - d. Teams have 30 seconds from the team's introduction to start the routine. If a team exceeds this time limit, a penalty of a .25-point deduction for 1-5 seconds or a .5-point deduction for 6 seconds and over will be assessed.
 - e. All teams should refrain from any type of excessive celebration following the team's performance. Any team in violation will receive a ONE-point deduction.
 - f. There should not be any organized exits or other activities after the official end of the routine.
2. Timing will begin with the first movement, voice, or note of music, whichever comes first.
3. If a team (cheer team or pep band) exceeds the time limit, a penalty will be assessed for each violation. One (1) point deduction for 1-5 seconds over, Two (2) point deduction for 6 and over.
4. Acknowledging the potential variance caused by human reaction speed and sound system time variations, judges will not issue a deduction until 3 seconds over the allowed time. If a routine is retimed as part of a review, the exact time will be used without the 3 second allowance listed above.
5. Because penalties are severe, it is recommended that all teams time their performance several times prior to competition and leave a several second cushion to allow for variations in sound equipment.

Performance Routines - Each performance routine presentation must include at least one cheer or sideline chant.

- Maximum Overall Time: 2:30 (150 Seconds)
- Maximum Musical Portion: 1:45 (105 Seconds)

Game Day Routines - Each Game Day performance must consist of a Band Chant, Crowd Leading section, and Fight Song.

- Maximum Overall Time: 3:00 (180 Seconds)

Game Day Live – Game Day Routine plus the inclusion of a Pep Band

- Maximum Overall Time: 5:00 (300 Seconds)
- Maximum Cheer Routine: 3:00 (180 Seconds)

For Game Day Routines, **timing of the routine** will NOT include the team spirting, rallying, or individuals performing jumps, kicks, tumbling, **or single-based lifts** but will begin with the first group movement, voice, or note of music, whichever comes first. **The entrance time limit of 30 seconds still applies for Game Day routines.**

VIRTUAL COMPETITION GUIDELINES

1. All videos must be recorded in a single take. Edited footage will not be accepted. Footage may not be edited to add in the template, introduction card, program logo, etc. Editing the template or not including the template will result in a 1-point deduction.
2. Filming Guidelines — We've created a step-by-step PDF guide, [HERE](#) with filming requirements and tips.
3. Awards - Division placement banners will be awarded to each team competing that will be mailed following the event. Awards Presentations for each Virtual Competition will be hosted on Varsity TV and will be FREE to all viewers on their scheduled awards day.
4. To upload a performance video, you must create a Varsity TV account. The account does **not** need to have an active subscription in order to upload a video. However, to view the videos on the event day, you need an active Varsity TV subscription. If you have questions about your Varsity TV account, [click here](#).
5. VIRTUAL COMPETITION MUSIC GUIDELINES
 - a. School Cheer & Open Rec: All routines will be judged with sound and available for Varsity TV subscriber viewing with sound for 48 hours once the event goes live. After 48 hours, the routines will be available without sound for Varsity TV subscribers. After 5 days, routines will be available free of charge without sound for the duration of the competition season.
 - b. Only music capture incidentally will be permitted. No music can be edited into the video. Teams who do edit music into the video will receive a 2-point penalty.

COMPETITION PERFORMANCE AREA

1. Participants must start in the competition area with at least one foot on the ground.
2. Teams may line up anywhere inside the competition area.
3. UCA Competitions comply with the NFHS surface ruling that school-based programs may not compete on a spring floor.
4. Approximate floor size will be 54 feet wide by 42 feet deep (9 strips).
5. **Teams should not have choreographed movements to enter the stage. Teams have 30 seconds from the team's introduction to take the floor and start the routine. If a team exceeds this time limit, a penalty of a .25-point deduction for 1-5 seconds or .5-point deduction for 6 seconds and over will be assessed.**
6. Any team member stepping outside or touching outside the performance area will cause the squad to receive a .5 penalty per occurrence. Pep Band members must remain in the designated area during the performance. **If a violation is assessed, the judges' decisions are final and will not be reviewed.**
 - a. The white line is considered a warning mark.
 - b. **A penalty will be assessed when any or a combination of the following occurs: two hands, two feet, or any part of the seat or torso touches outside of the performance surface.**
 - c. Once a team member takes the floor, they must remain on the floor until the end of the performance.
7. All team mascots (ex: stuffed animals), center markers, etc. are prohibited. The center will be marked on all performance surfaces.
8. Signs or props may be safely placed or dropped outside the competition area by a team member who must remain inside the competition area. Please see the deduction explanation sheet for additional Prop Restrictions. **(See Game Day LIVE division rules for additional prop guidelines)**

- a. Approved props include foam fingers, rally towels, signs, poms, flags and/or megaphones. Props should be used for crowd leading and appropriate for crowd response.
- b. Props may not be thrown into the crowd.
- c. Props cannot bear the weight of the performer. This includes sideline cheer/dance boxes used at games.
- d. No air horns or artificial noise makers allowed.
- e. **Props may be discarded off the performance surface but not hit/banged on the floor outside the performance area.**
- f. Prop approvals or prop questions can be submitted to UCARules@varsity.com and must be received at least 2 weeks prior to your event.

WARM-UP TO COMPETITION POLICY

The time between when a team finishes warm-ups and is on the competition floor should be no sooner than 8 minutes and no longer than 30 minutes. **NOTE: Teams delayed performing after 30 minutes should have the opportunity to warm up again or be given an area and posted a list of exercises to rewarm up their muscles: Quick Toe Raises, Squat Jumps, Jumping Jacks, Bridges, Running with High Knees and or Punches.**

Based on an event's facilities, the performance schedule may allow for more or less time to get from warm-up to the competition arena. Event Officials will monitor timing and work to provide the safest competition environment for all athletes.

VIOLATIONS

Any team in violation of these UCA Event Guidelines or any of the above-mentioned guidelines will be assessed a **one (1)** point general deduction. This deduction does not apply to deduction or violations within the point deduction system or already assigned a lower/higher point value. Go to uca.varsity.com for more specifics.

LEGALITY REVIEW (PRE-EVENT)

A deduction will be given for EACH safety/general competition rule violation. Athlete and building deductions can be found on the UCA scoring page [Competition Rules & Scoring | Universal Cheerleaders Association \(varsity.com\)](http://UCA.com) The review process for UCA Regional Events and NHSCC can be found here: [UCA Review Process](http://UCA.com). Each event is a new event and reference to previous events within the season will not be allowed during the review of legality of skills.

SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR PARTNER STUNTS, PYRAMIDS AND TOSSES

Universal Cheerleaders Association offers a service to help teams with legality and safety questions. Teams will be able to submit skills throughout the year to receive a legality or safety response. This service will help teams get a response to use in situations where the skill may be in question.

To submit a video:

1. All reviews must be submitted through [UCA Legality Inquiry Form \(jotform.com\)](http://UCA.com)
2. The skill in question must be recorded by the team at practice. We are unable to accept videos of performances, competitions, or of other teams.
2. All submissions must include the coach, team, and division.
3. The recording will be reviewed as if every person in the video is included in the skill. This would include additional spotters.
4. Videos are limited to 30 seconds and must be able to be viewed upright without rotating.
6. All videos will receive either a "legal" or "illegal" response. If the video receives an "illegal" response, the entire video will not be reviewed but stopped at the point that the video was illegal. *If the video is inconclusive, you will receive a response as to why we were unable to make a judgement on the video. It is up to you as a coach to resubmit the video to be re-reviewed.

7. Please note: Only submitting the skill will make the skill eligible for a warning. UCA can only guarantee this process will be accepted at UCA-branded events. This would not include other Varsity-branded and state association events.
8. Videos via text message or facetime will not be reviewed. If you know that your video does not meet all the requirements above, please refilm/resubmit the video. Only videos that meet the above requirements will be reviewed.
9. Inquiries need to be submitted 2 weeks before your team's performance to guarantee a response.
10. Video submissions will only be accepted by the official coach of the team.

If you have any questions or require additional assistance, please email UCARules@varsity.com. Due to volume, please allow up to 5 business days to get back to you. Include your team's name, your name, division, and a contact phone number. NHSCC rules questions must be submitted by **January 24, 2024**. If received after the deadline, the video is not guaranteed a response.

SCORES AND RANKINGS

1. Individual score sheets are for the exclusive use of each particular judge. Each judge has the responsibility and authority to review and submit his or her final scores and rankings prior to the final tally of the scores for all teams. Scores and rankings will be available only to coaches or captains at the conclusion of the competition. Judges' decisions are final.
2. Any deductions or violations will be taken off the final score. For more information on scoring, score sheet and judging criteria, please visit uca.varsity.com.
3. Please send any scoring questions to UCAscoring@varsity.com at the conclusion of the event.
4. REGIONAL COMPETITION TIE BREAK POLICY – Ties will not be broken at UCA Regional Competitions.
5. NHSCC TIE BREAK POLICY – Ties will only be broken for **FIRST PLACE** in the **FINAL ROUND** of competition at the NHSCC. The team with the lessor deductions will be awarded first place. If the deductions remain equal, the tie will not be broken and both teams will be awarded first place.
6. By participating in a Varsity event, teams give their consent for performances and scores to be made public.
7. Varsity TV publishes and makes available all competition routine videos from live-streamed events to recognize the hard work and talent of the athletes competing, and ultimately, to serve and grow the cheerleading and dance community. Due to the sheer number of teams and routines published, Varsity Spirit is unable to accommodate requests for removal.

HOW TO HANDLE PROCEDURAL QUESTIONS

1. RULES & PROCEDURES - Any questions concerning the rules or procedures of the competition will be handled exclusively by the advisor / coach of the team and will be directed to the Competition Director. Such questions should be asked prior to the team's competition performance.
2. PERFORMANCE - Any questions concerning the team's performance should be made to the Competition Director immediately after the team's performance and/or following the outcome of the competition.
3. MUSIC / AGE - Any questions concerning a specific violation in music compliance must be submitted in writing to the Competition Director immediately following the team's performance.

INTERPRETATIONS AND / OR RULINGS

Any interpretation of these UCA Event Guidelines or any decision involving any other aspect of the competition will be rendered by the Rules Committee. The Rules Committee will render a judgment in an effort to ensure that the competition proceeds in a manner consistent with the general spirit and goals of the competition. The Rules Committee will consist of the Competition Director, Head Judge, and a designated competition official.

GAME DAY ROUTINE FORMAT

1. The performance will follow this order: **Band Chant, Crowd Leading, Fight Song.**
2. The use of crowd leading tools is recommended (All are not required).

- a. Approved props include foam fingers, rally towels, signs, poms, flags and/or megaphones. Props should be used for crowd leading and appropriate for crowd response.
 - b. Props may not be thrown into the crowd.
 - c. Props cannot bear the weight of the performer. This includes sideline cheer/dance boxes used at games.
 - d. No air horns or artificial noise makers allowed.
 - e. **Props may be discarded off the performance surface but not hit/banged on the floor outside the performance area.**
 - f. Prop approvals or prop questions can be submitted to UCARules@varsity.com and must be received at least 2 weeks prior to your event.
3. The incorporation of stunts/tumbling is required in the **Crowd Leading** and Fight Song sections if the division permits.
 4. **Band Chant** should have an emphasis on crowd appeal and practicality – No stunting or tumbling is permitted, however jumps and kicks are allowed. **Squads should focus on crowd engagement and visual appeal and use creative movements such as level changes and ripples.**
 5. **Crowd Leading** - Following the band chant, the announcer will give squads a game scenario indicating an offense or defense situation. Teams should show their definitive understanding of the situation with an offensive or defensive Sideline. After the Situational Sideline, teams will move into their Cheer which can include one reflective of a timeout, general sideline/spell-out or other cheer material that incites a response and encourages the crowd to yell along. Teams will be evaluated on their ability to lead the crowd, crowd effectiveness, proper use of motions/crowd leading tools and execution of stunts/tumbling relevant to a game day environment.
 6. **Fight Song** - Incorporation is limited to three (3) consecutive 8-counts of stunts and/or tumbling. If the fight song repeats, the incorporation will only be allowed both times if it is repeated exactly the same both times. Counting will begin with the first initiation of a skill (stunt or tumbling) until one of the following:
 - a. The routine ends within the 3 consecutive 8 counts.
 - b. Building Skills must be stationary prior to the end of the 3rd 8-count and may remain stationary until the end of the routine.
 - c. Dismounts following the completion of the routine will not be included for timing purposes. **Any choreographed dismounts will continue the timing of the routine. Example – Coed toe touch pop offs performed together, in unison would be considered choreographed.**
 7. Each section should have a beginning and end. Note: Spirited crowd leading interaction between each section is encouraged to continue the game day feel. Stunts are not allowed as a transition before/between sections, including the team's entry to the floor and any time before starting the performance. Tumbling and **single-based lifts** are allowed anytime during the performance except during the Band Chant.
 8. Additional Skill Restrictions
 - **Basket and waist level** tosses are NOT allowed. **Examples of toss skills allowed are quick toss stunts, toss coed skills, and toss toe touches.**
 - Inversions are NOT allowed.
 - Twisting Released Dismounts are NOT allowed.
 - Single leg stunts are limited to liberties and liberty hitches.
 - Running Tumbling is NOT allowed.
 - **Single standing tumbling is allowed and cannot be connected. A single tumbling skill can only be connected to a single jump. The only standing tumbling skills that are allowed include back handspring, back tuck, forward roll, front walkover, cartwheel, standing aerial, jump back handspring, and jump tuck.**
 10. Any deductions or violations will be taken off the final averaged score. For more information on scoring, score sheets and judging criteria, please visit uca.varsity.com.
 11. **For Game Day routines only, voice-overs and words may not be recorded or overlayed on the music tracks to make the team's vocal projection sound louder.**

GAME DAY LIVE ROUTINE FORMAT & PEP BAND GUIDELINES

1. Same rules and skill restrictions will still apply as the above stated guidelines for Game Day Routines.
2. Pep Band/Color Guard members would be allowed to play for multiple performances; however, they may only play for the school they attend. The pep band must be current members of the official pep band/Color Guard for the school they are representing.
3. The Pep Band/Color Guard must be in a school-related, coordinated outfit (i.e., traditional team uniform, coordinated outfit representing your school colors, letters, mascot, etc.).
4. The entire performance may not exceed 5 minutes with entry and exit of all performers. **Teams must enter from same location.**
5. **Pep Bands/Color Guard may use props.**
 - a. **Props must conform to the [NFHS Band safety course guidelines](#).**
 - b. **Props allowed include those listed above for cheer teams.**
 - c. Single swing flag is the **ONLY additional** prop allowed for Color Guard.
 - i. Single swing flag tosses are allowed. However, angled tosses are prohibited. Horizontal (if center on the body) and Vertical tosses are the only planes of travel allowed **for single swing flags**.
 - d. **Batons, rifles, and sabers are not allowed.**
 - e. Props cannot bear the weight of the performer. This includes sideline boxes/band platforms used at games.
6. **Pep Band/Color Guard instrument rules:**
 - a. **ONLY** Handheld or harnessed instruments allowed by the pep band.
 - b. Pep Bands/Color Guard will be responsible for transportation of all equipment to and from the event.
7. Pep band/Color Guard members may not be involved in any stunts, tumbling, splits, leaps or aerial skills **and should position themselves away from skills being performed.**
8. Designated Pep Band/Color Guard Performance Area.
 - a. Pep Bands/Color Guard will line up anywhere center stage within the performing surface (54 X 42) and their timing will begin the first beat of music.
 - b. Pep bands/Color Guard must remain in designated areas of approximately 54 feet wide by 5 feet deep on the back side (behind the mats). Additional performance areas on either side of the raised stage of 5 feet wide by 42 feet deep each area will be designated.
 - c. Pep Bands/Color Guard will be limited to 40 total members. Teams may place those members to the side or back with a maximum of 20 members in each location.
 - d. During the performance, Pep Band/Color Guard members are allowed to change formation but must remain in the designated performance area in which they started.
 - e. Any team member stepping outside or touching outside the performance area **with both feet** will cause a .5 penalty per occurrence. Pep Band/Color Guard members must remain in designated area during the performance.
 - f. Once a team member takes the floor, they must remain on the floor until the end of the performance.
9. Game Day LIVE Format
 - a. **Pep Band/Color Guard and/or Cheer will have 30 (thirty) seconds to preset for their Game Day LIVE performance. Athletes / performers must all enter from the same location.**
 - b. **The announcer will introduce the team, and the Pep Band will have 1 (one) minute to play any cadence or song.**
 - **Only the Pep Band/Color Guard is scored at this time.**
 - **The cheer team should be positioned so that the Pep Band can adequately be scored but may rally the crowd during this time. NO skills are allowed at this time.**
 - **The performance will start with the first beat of music.**
 - c. **BAND CHANT:** The pep band/color guard may remain on the stage/mat during the Band Chant portion of the Game Day routine. Pep Band should focus on playing spirited music that reflects a game day environment, and that the cheerleaders can incorporate visual movements to.

- d. Prior to the end of the Band Chant, the Pep Band must relocate to the designated areas before the start of the crowd leading section.
- e. **CROWD LEADING:** The pep band should provide a cadence that the cheer team and crowd back home could easily yell along with, eliciting a crowd response during the situational sideline. There must be a clear distinction between the Sideline and kicking off the Cheer portion. The cheerleaders and pep band may show spirited interaction as a clear transition. The pep band's role is to influence crowd participation by responding to the cheer team's call-backs and encouraging the crowd to yell along. They may also create a cadence that would be relevant to the game day environment to increase the overall crowd effectiveness.
- f. **FIGHT SONG:** The final element should reflect your school's traditional Fight Song. For teams that do not have an official Fight Song, it is recommended to use a second selection of band chant music. When performing the fight song, the pep band should focus on sound quality, technical accuracy, musicality and engagement. They should lead the cheerleaders and the crowd with their performance, as well as participate in call-backs, if applicable.
- g. **RUN OFF:** The pep band has 30 seconds to play original, spirited music while the cheerleaders exit the competition floor. Once the piece ends, the pep band may exit. Only the pep band is scored during this time. **Cheer and Pep Band/Color Guard must exit to the same location.**
- h. **The use of pre-recorded tracks is not prohibited. However, it is recommended that the Pep Band members provide the music live for the entirety of the routine.**

2024-2025 SAFETY RULES AND ADDITIONAL DIVISION RESTRICTIONS

Rules subject to change by USA Cheer. Go to usacheer.org for the most updated rules.

- Open Rec and Junior High Divisions will be restricted from performing any type of toss (basket, elevator, or similar multi-based tosses) or waist level cradles.
- Non-Tumbling Divisions will restrict any hip over head rotation except for entries and exits to stunts/pyramids. Back handspring entries WILL NOT be allowed in the Non-Tumbling Divisions.
- Non-Building Divisions will restrict any athlete from providing support to another athlete off the performing surface.

National High School Cheerleading Championship Information

HOW TO QUALIFY FOR THE 2025 NHSCC:

In order to qualify for our National High School Cheerleading Championship (NHSCC), teams are required to fulfil the following requirements:

1. 75% of the qualifying team must have attended a 2 Day Varsity Spirit Summer Camp and participate in the Squad Credentialing program.
2. Compete and receive a bid at a 2025 UCA qualifying regional competition for the 2025 National High School Cheerleading Championship. **Teams who do not receive a bid at their in-person regional may email NHSCC@varsity.com for other eligibility options.**
3. The division the team competes in at the regional will be the only division the team is allowed to compete in at the NHSCC. Exception – some divisions at the NHSCC are further split by Team Size or School Size.
4. **Teams may qualify for bids in multiple divisions if competing at different regional qualifying events for each division of the same routine type.**
5. Individuals may NOT represent more than one team at the National Championship. Exception – Junior Varsity members may perform with the Varsity in a Varsity Game Day Division. See Division guidelines above.
6. To create a Championship that gives equal opportunity for schools of similar student composition, UCA will sub-divide the Varsity divisions at the NHSCC based on school enrollments in the 9th - 12th grades as of October 1, 2024. Varsity Divisions I & II – Please provide a letter signed and verified from your registrar's office on school letterhead with your total enrollment information. See Enrollment guidelines above. Check out www.uca.varsity.com for more details.
7. **Attending a regional UCA competition does not guarantee a bid to the National High School Cheerleading Championship. Only scores of 90% or higher are guaranteed a bid. Additional bids are awarded for teams based on the following factors:**
 - a. Depth of division
 - b. Scores above the natural break in a division
 - c. Deductions
 - d. Raw scores versus final scores
 - e. National averages**It is the discretion of the Event Director and Scoring Manager to determine to award bids based on these factors. At the conclusion of the event all bids are final.**
8. **Virtual events are not eligible for bids to NHSCC. For states in which no regional event is available within close proximity, teams may request prior approval for a virtual bid. Email NHSCC@varsity.com**

HOW TO QUALIFY FOR GAME DAY LIVE AT 2025 NHSCC:

In order to qualify for our National High School Cheerleading Championship (NHSCC) in the Game Day Live division, teams are required to fulfil the following requirements:

1. **Cheerleaders:**
 - a. The cheer team must attend a UCA Regional Competition and compete and receive a bid in the Game Day division.
 - b. Teams that accept the invitation to compete in the Game Day Live division will ONLY be allowed to compete in the LIVE version of Game Day. They will not be allowed to compete in another Game Day division.
2. **Pep Band:**
 - a. If a pep band and cheer team choose to attend a competition; the pep band must register for the event and complete a release waiver for each participant.
 - b. The pep band must be current members of the official pep band for the school they are representing.
 - c. The pep band must be in a school-related, coordinated outfit (i.e., traditional team uniform, coordinated outfit representing your school colors, letters, mascot, etc.).
3. **Visit uca.varsity.com or contact your State Director for Game Day Live event availability.**

NHSCC SPECIFIC EVENT GUIDELINES

Please note: All UCA Event Guidelines in this document will apply at the NHSCC. The following Event Guidelines are in addition to and specific to the National High School Cheerleading Championship.

NHSCC CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISIONS

Athletes may only perform up to 2 times if one routine is a performance routine and the other is a game day routine. If an athlete is performing 2 times, they must be representing the same program/school in both performances.

Teams must compete in the same style Performance Routine and Game Day Routine. i.e. Non-Tumbling or Non-Building must be the same for both.

UCA/UDA strongly recommends that you have an alternate (not a member of another competing squad at the same event), who is prepared to substitute in the event of injury, probation, etc. No cheerleader/dancer may represent more than one Team, even in the event of injury or emergency.

TOURNAMENT FACILITY

1. The competition is scheduled to be held at Disney's Wide World of Sports®
2. The tournament officials shall have the right to alter the time and location of the competition in the event changes because necessary due to inclement weather, facility problems, television production requirements, or any other situation deemed by the tournament offices to be essential to the successful execution of the championship.

ROUNDS OF COMPETITION

1. UCA reserves the right to determine if a preliminary, semi-final or final round will be necessary. All divisions with only one round prior to the finals will be classified as semi-finals.
2. From each round of competition, 50% of the teams in each round/group will advance.
3. Final rounds of competition will be confirmed two weeks prior to the championship; however, all advancements will be based on the final number of teams that perform in each round/group. A minimum of 3 teams will advance to the finals round of competition. **A maximum of 12 teams will advance from each round.**
4. Tournament officials will have full authority to make the final determination of the **number of rounds and the** of teams selected to advance. In the event of a tie for the final spot advancing, both teams that are tied will move on. In the event of a tie for first in the preliminary round, both teams will automatically advance to the final round.
5. UCA will combine divisions in the best interest of providing a competitive environment. When/If a division has less than 3 teams, they may be combined into the same age/size division. Division combinations will be finalized no later than 2 weeks prior to the NHSCC.
6. **Order of Competition**
 - **The Order of Competition for the first round will be determined by a random draw.**
 - **Advancing rounds will be determined by reverse rank with the lowest ranking team performing first.**
 - **Divisions with multiple prelim/semi-final groups that combine into one round of competition will be combined based on each groups' ranking and alternated accordingly.**
 - **Teams with scheduling conflicts when advancing to the next round must submit a schedule change request within 30 minutes of the division announcements. Teams will be moved earlier in the schedule for one of the performances.**
7. The top team in each preliminary will automatically advance to the finals in their respective division unless otherwise listed below.

Advancing Guidelines

- Divisions with 0-24 or less teams will have a Semi-Final and Final Round.
- Divisions with 25-40 teams will have a Preliminary A/B, Semi-Final and Final Round.
- Divisions with 41-60 teams will have a Preliminary A/B/C, Semi-Final and Final Round.
- Divisions with 61-80 teams will have a Preliminary A/B/C/D, A/B Semi-Final and C/D Semi-Final and Final Round.
- Divisions with 81 or more teams will have a Preliminary A/B/C/D/E/F, A/B/C Semi-Final and D/E/F Semi-Final and Final Round.

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP PARTICIPATION

1. It is understood that teams that participate in the National High School Cheerleading Championship will NOT knowingly and willingly participate in any other cheerleading event promoted as a national or international championship for the 2024-2025 school year. (Exception: USA National Championship and The Quest Recreational Championship) This includes all prizes and awards labeled as National or International Champions.
2. School teams cannot compete in another event promoted as a National or International Championship (Exception: ICU World Cheerleading Championships and World School Cheerleading Championships) for the 2024-2025 school year within a school division or category regardless of team name.
3. A school can compete at UCA and NCA if that team is recognized as a separate team by the school and no athletes are the same. (No athletes can compete at both events)
4. Teams who violate this rule will be subject to disqualification and will forfeit the opportunity to participate in the subsequent National High School Cheerleading Championship.

PRIZES AND AWARDS

1. All athletes performing on the team must be registered and rostered for the event.
2. All teams in the final round of competition will receive a trophy.
3. Teams who rank first, second, or third place will additionally receive a bronze, silver, or gold medallions for each athlete who performed on the floor plus two coaches and up to 5 additional rostered alternates, administrators or other.
4. National Champion teams will receive a champion banner.
5. National Champion teams will receive a National Champion jacket for each division/category. Jackets will be awarded for each athlete who performed on the floor plus two coaches and up to 5 additional rostered alternates.
6. Additional medallions and jackets may be requested at the conclusion of the event. Additional award requests will be shipped, based on availability, following the event.

TELEVISION COVERAGE

The National High School Cheerleading Championship is nationally televised on ESPN and ESPN2. Because of the format of the show, not all finalist teams will be shown on the telecast.

APPEARANCES, ENDORSEMENTS AND PUBLICITY

All teams winning titles, awards or prizes agree to have all appearances, endorsements and publicity approved through the NHSCC office.

UCA EVENT GUIDELINES AGREEMENT

By accepting the Terms and Conditions as the authorized person from my program I agree and acknowledge that (i) I am the sponsor/director of the team (ii) I have read and understand the foregoing, (iii) I will be solely responsible for communicating the foregoing to all coaches/directors in my program that will coaching and directing teams at the UCA Regional Competition and NHSCC, (iv) I will ensure that my teams will comply with all rules and regulations at all times, and (v) my team will support the results of the competition, as I am a role model for my programs. **I have read and reviewed both these specific UCA Event Guidelines and the Varsity Spirit Rules and Regulations.**

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